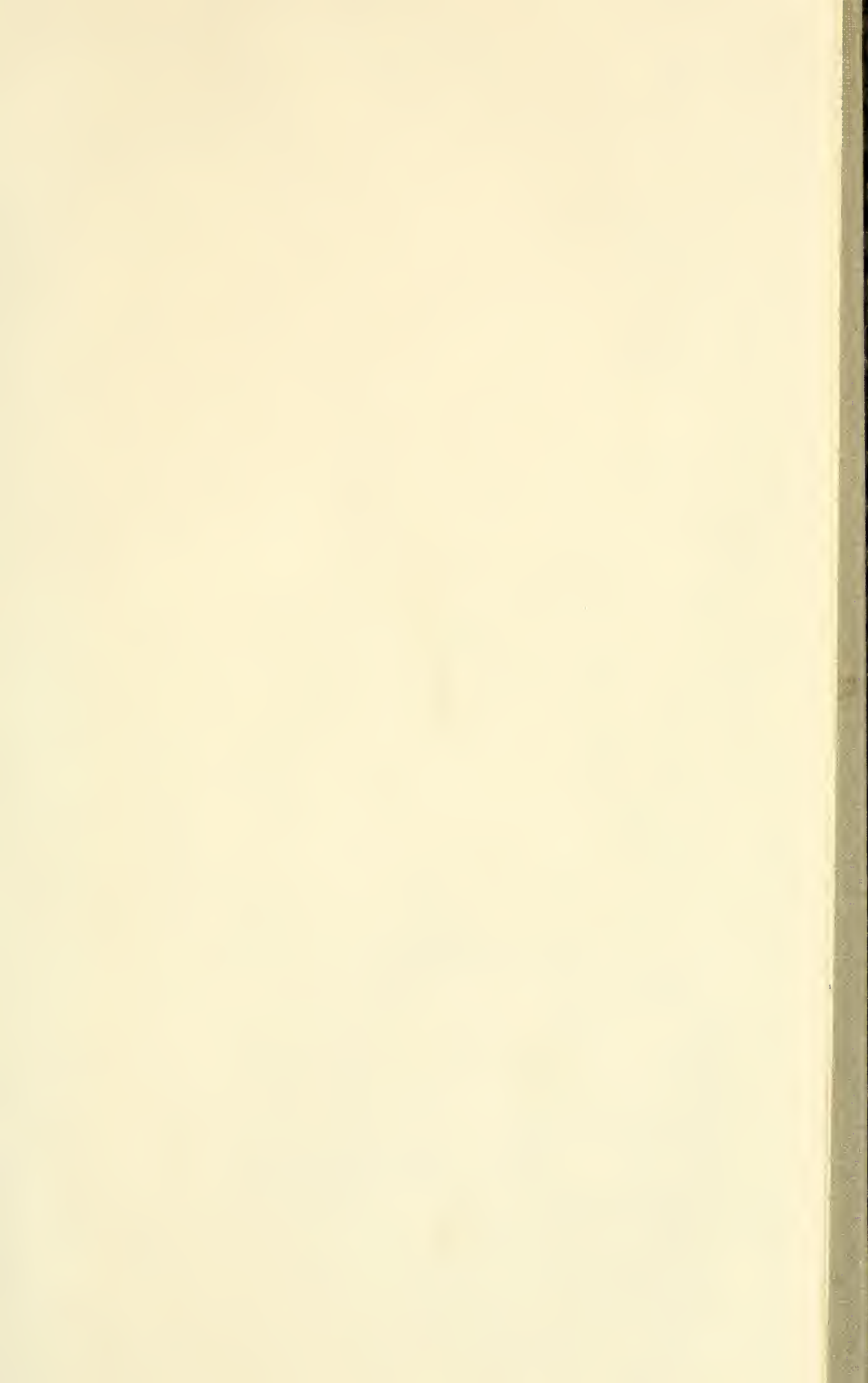


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NANSEN.

A Poem

BY
REGINALD C. ROBBINS

PUBLISHED BY
WM. DIGNFY & CO., PRINTERS,
BOSTON.

1898.
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1997

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NANSEN.

“Mid ice and night onward and onward: ice,
Night unresisted heaving on and on
Though motiveless yet mightily my life
In passion of the pack; pressing on, on
From nought through nought: no-progress; passage proved
Prison; persistence, powerlessness: or Pole
Or no Pole, equal impotence! In patience
My soul sees, even in impotence, fulfill'd
The prophecy that built, equipt, launch'd forth
Her foresight. Yea; this power, this thrust and stress
At bend and burst broad, loud below in the bleak,
My heart holds; comprehends; conclusively
Bursts beyond, thrusts down, down and bounds above
In freedom of buoyancy. My ship, my soul
Are motive; are sun and strength beyond aught here!

“Passion and patience of the universe,
Doom'd to this dead, eternal ice and night!
From nought through nought and nowhere any end;
No bourne to passage, strength to patience none;
Motive to life nor any life save death:
Moon, and these myriad stars moon-dead to-be! —
Yet: what of this that knows, that wills an end,
This God-I-Am: for-whom, through-whom, in-whom
Alone are ice and night and any thing:
This strength-of-suffering, power of life-through-death;
Prophet, transcendence of the darkness here?
Something, through uttermost of ice and night,
Will that I question fact; unfelt before
Somewhat essential beyond ice or night
Questions the doom; demands, if there be life
In-me and through-me, how may death persist,
Ice and night so entomb earth's truth-to-be?
World ceases not, though I cease or not-cess!
What of world's soul that comprehends; concludes
Together nought with nought; proves passage, bourne;
Chaos yet cosmos, sentient-systeming:
Moon-dearth but sensible by strength of sun;
Strength endless, being criterion of end?

Of energy-potential kinetized
Toward equilibrium: equilibrium
But nothingness, no-force, non-end inane.
Moon, nought save shown in sloth of swooning sun.
And if, in such dissemination, 'soul'
(Nice nerve-vibration) over and beyond
The grosser substance chemical gain growth
And power organic over and beyond
The less-organic; stands the law the same:
Such and such from the nebula to now
Mere evolution of the nerve from vague
Chaos through energy kinetic, sun
And star and sphere on sphere, through molten mass,
Rock-metal, vegetation, sinew'd flesh
To man's brain: and from now back, back to night,
Cold crystalline benumbing up of nerve
In cosmical pulsation: now from man
Back to chill'd coalescence organless,
Lifeless conglomeration: ice and night!—
Ha! the stars stab, the bellowing below
Mocks to the marrow! Unto ice and night
Dedicate nerve's destruction! Now, to-night
(What of the years of the world if years yield nought?)
Now, to-night end all; headlong to the doom
Dash on the blank pack's bosom: far below
Beat brain out: end the agony! In name
Of Kelvin, Huxley, now, to-night I leap:
Anticipate, make mine the doom of all!—

“ Mine? Mine the doom of all! I hesitate:
Hold breath; breathe deep this agony of air:
Make it my blood and feel it mine! I am!
Life is what means it to be one of these!—
Alive; I-am; nebula, nerve or night;
Necessitating future still as past
More and more, past as future, each in each!
World ceases not: nor I cease. World I am!—
And it is new, this union: yet by will
To end all proved, made perfect endlessly
In intellectual action: Christ-with-Kant!—
Faith for the facts! Feel faith and find fact truth!

"This logic of life-origin, this law
 Of link'd necessity? Can link by link
 Interminably link'd explain one life?
 Mere mutuality, one molecule
 Save as the mutual mean identity:
 My-life, or molecule, an union'd world?
 Ay; in such sort: if just this self of mine —
 God-mechanician to their made machine,
 Else unmechanic mere nonentity! —
 Hypothesized yet unexplain'd remain
 (Hardly residuum, scarce for fact beyond)
 Still for true source, being synthesis, of these,
 Conscience and explanation, linkage, law —
 (Sunlike to shrinkage of moon soulless else!) —
 Not cause, yet all-causation; through and through
 Immanence and intelligence of all
 Else lawless, linkless, unionless, inane:
 Self-ideality of each through each;
 Each for-itself forselfness even as I,
 Identified in me as selfhood all:
 The molecule-in-man, man-molecule;
 Native reality: and only so
 Real at all, molecule or man, for-me:
 Past, future, none less instant, self-for-self,
 Real union, sentience each; though yet for-me
 Polar, unmeaning save as union'd now.
 Ay; that I am, I am: all else in-me
 (As I in-them, through-them, by mutual proof —
 How else, conceived empirics-error, save
 World's self-assertion, countervail'd to mine,
 Insofarforth show Self neutrality?)
 Through-me make mutuality of self
 Distinct, determinate, dividual
 Yet individual universally.
 All that I am, I am: this world-of-mine;
 This universe: alive by saviorship,
 (Monad or motive) Christhood-vicarage!
 Development-proved-world-dissipation proves
 By world-retort a false criterion,
 Half-standard contradictory: proves worth
 Of absolute process, progress-regressive
 In pure polarity self-reconciled

Evolving, mind from matter, most from least.
 Law, from the nucleus to now, but time
 Of self's maturing: ever to mature:
 Even in the space-dissemination, time's
 Ingathering of momentum; human mind
 O'er mental-nebula progressive still
 In mutual-internality of lore,
 Even as o'er physical man the molecule
 Nebular stood, still stands preëminent
 In property-material of force
 Extern, displacement substantive; alike
 Materio-mental, least and most: one Soul
 Erst nebular, now nebular-humane;
 Ubiquitous, being all-self-spatialized;
 Eternal, being all-temporality:
 Mine erst, mine now, mine still eternally;
 By perpetuity-through-passingness
 (This perfectness of process) nebula
 To now, yet now by being but nebular
 (Past and to-come but poles of permanence):
 Eternally my universe humane! —
 Is it, world-mutuality may end?
 Yet mutual how, save well aware through each,
 Alive each molecule—that may not end,
 Being each for-self criterion of end,
 World-mutuality in-self alone? —
 Ice and night, 'ice' and 'night' (man's metaphor
 For end-unmeaning, dead) but humanly;
 Ice yet for-ice, night yet for-night, humane
 In selfhood nebular-molecular:
 Moon yet for-moon as sun for-sun, one world —
 (Transcending metaphor) each molecule! —
 Union'd, processional unendingly —
 Soul not above, beyond; but immanent
 Self-reference, intelligence through all!

"Lo! for behalf of such as scarce may speak,
 Lo! for life's ice and night, life laughs at loss:
 Takes truth from lightning of the blank below:
 Spurns space-dissemination: in despite
 Turns law to law's impassion'd intellect
 Proved in performance of my ship, my soul

Their prophecy, foresighted impotence!
 Lo! proved in the patience under pressure, power
 Of passive Pole-persistence (extreme
 Passion of logic push'd to point), behold
 Motived preëminence of manhood-plan
 O'er potency less-mental; o'er the bleak
 Ice and night I for vicar proving world
 Processive, though pulsation'd: I by proof
 Lifting the lost to life's intelligence;
 Fact-science to philosophy by faith.
 What of the equilibrium, inane
 Frosting of nerve to nothingness? By pace
 Equal, if opposite, above, beyond
 The physical degeneration steps
 The 'psychic' subtlety: nor moon nor star
 Shows soul-futurity, save star or moon
 In spirit equal-born!—And I north, north
 Push, overpower, soul-overweight their world
 Of space-passivity; their extreme verge
 Of sphere yet union'd Pole through zone, yet proved
 Axial, self-orbited—being but motived more
 Pass on the lamp of light, cramp boundaries,
 Burst and break down the barriers (limit proved
 Barrier but by bursting); limitless
 Lead on the more-than-human mind-to-come
 In conquest of physic's frigidity;
 More and more conquer'd, spurn'd beyond, the more
 Frosted in deadness of new ice and night.—
 Ay; and in conquest more and more shall world
 (Or human or some supra-human nerve,
 Some more-than-nerve) by reconciling more
 More comprehend, include and lift to light
 The 'deadness' and the 'darkness'; more and more
 Shall time to-come, immanent-now, make now
 An explanation and intelligence
 By selfhood.—As my selfhood, savior now
 Springs forth in fire abroad, auroral, vast
 From stiffening of this Christhood on the cross
 Stark aloft! From the vicarage complete
 (Torment of stars or mockery of moon;
 This intellectual agony made mine);
 Eternal principle of every end—

Christ for the ice and night, redeeming these! —
For whom alone meaning or end may be:
World-saviorship that shall not end! —

“I rave?”

Drunk with the drench of drouth, of death? I freeze? —
Ha! the skies scoff! I still am doom'd in dream:
Man, with the dead-eternal ice and night.”

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